

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 820

By Miller L

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend the legendary musical group, The Bar-Kays, of Memphis on the 40th anniversary of their aviation tragedy.

WHEREAS, Tennessee proudly possesses an incomparable musical heritage from Memphis to Mountain City, with many of her gifted sons and daughters winning national and international acclaim as legendary musicians, songwriters, and performers; and

WHEREAS, one such group of legendary musicians are The Bar-Kays, who produced some of the funkier soul music ever played by a native Memphis band, an accolade that speaks volumes about both their creative talent and musicianship; and

WHEREAS, formed in Memphis in 1966, The Bar-Kays were originally composed of guitarist Jimmy King, saxophonist Phalon Jones, drummer Carl Cunningham, keyboardist Ronnie Caldwell, bassist James Alexander, and trumpet player Ben Cauley; and

WHEREAS, a group of neighborhood kids from South Memphis, many members of The Bar-Kays were students at Booker T. Washington High School, and the mostly underage band became a favorite at late-night clubs like the Hippodrome, adding their flashy step and dance moves into a repertoire of rhythm and blues songs; and

WHEREAS, in the spring of 1967, the group released their debut single "Soul Finger" on legendary Stax Records. The song, destined to become an R&B classic, hit No. 3 on the *Billboard* R&B charts and quickly launched the young Bar-Kays as a hit act, following in the footsteps of Stax label mates, Booker T. & the MGs; and

WHEREAS, catching the Bar-Kays in concert, the great Otis Redding, Stax's signature star, was taken by their sound and asked them to join him on tour, taking care of their travel arrangements by providing his plane to pick them up on Fridays at the end of the school week so they could perform with him on weekends; and

WHEREAS, after performing a 10-night stand at the famous Apollo Theatre in Harlem during the summer of 1967, the Bar-Kays and Otis Redding proved to be a perfect musical fit and were deemed "a match made in heaven" by Bar-Kay Ben Cauley; and

WHEREAS, after a short pause from the road, during which time Otis Redding wrote and recorded his swan song, "(Sittin' on the) Dock of the Bay," the tour resumed with the musical acts playing weekend shows at colleges around the nation with the band and entourage traveling on Redding's new twin engine Beechcraft; and

WHEREAS, with three shows booked for the weekend of December 8-10, 1967, the group flew to Cleveland, Ohio, after a performance in Nashville at Vanderbilt University, and appeared on the television program, "Upbeat," and then played a concert; and

WHEREAS, rising early the next morning to fly to Madison, Wisconsin, the group members boarded the Beechcraft with Otis Redding for the fateful flight that would end in tragedy as the plane later crashed in Lake Monona just outside of Madison, killing everyone on board except Bar-Kay trumpet player Ben Cauley; and

WHEREAS, Bar-Kay bassist James Alexander missed the fatal flight, having volunteered to return the band's rental car in Cleveland and hop a commercial flight to Wisconsin after dropping his bandmates off at the hangar that morning; and

WHEREAS, after months of recovery and mourning, James Alexander and Ben Cauley reformed the band, with the new Bar-Kays debuting in 1968 and achieving success, recording and playing sessions at Stax and touring with such groups as the Temptations; and

WHEREAS, Ben Cauley would leave the group in 1972 to attend to his growing family and spend more time at home while continuing to share his musical talent as a much-in-demand session player in Memphis, Muscle Shoals, and Nashville; and

WHEREAS, James Alexander would continue with the group and still leads the Bar-Kays to this day, having enjoyed a career with the group that now spans 28 albums and 40 singles, including 5 gold albums and 1 platinum album along with 20 Top Ten albums and singles; and

WHEREAS, there are few musicians who have demonstrated the artistry, adaptability, and resiliency that The Bar-Kays have evidenced during their 40 years as a band, and their peerless musical legacy should be appropriately recognized by this Body; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor and recognize The Bar-Kays for their outstanding musical contributions to the State of Tennessee, paying respectful tribute to the memories of those group members no longer with us, and wish these gentlemen all the best as they continue to make great music in Memphis and extend their already impressive legacy.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.